



Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive

News Center

News Articles Collection

2012-05

DHS' Scalici Talks Domestic, International Threats

Center for Homeland Defense and Security

Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California

<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/50984>



Calhoun is a project of the Dudley Knox Library at NPS, furthering the precepts and goals of open government and government transparency. All information contained herein has been approved for release by the NPS Public Affairs Officer.

Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle
Monterey, California USA 93943

<http://www.nps.edu/library>

DHS' Scalici Talks Domestic, International Threats

 chds.us/c/item/772

State and local law enforcement and other first responders play a vital role in the nation's homeland security now that the United States sees continued terrorist threats overseas and growing perils domestically, a high-ranking Department of Homeland Security official said while visiting the Center for Homeland Defense and Security.

Dawn Scalici, deputy under secretary for analysis at DHS' Office of Intelligence and Analysis, was a guest speaker for the "Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Homeland Security" course on April 13.

Her presentation discussed continued threats emanating from al-Qaida and its allies, the growing menace of domestic terror groups coming from all ends of the political spectrum, and the danger posed by Iran and the groups it supports.

"We talked about the diverse and complex terrorist threat environment we face today," Scalici said during an interview after her presentations. "It is certainly more diverse than what we faced in the aftermath of 9/11. So, we are not just talking about core al-Qaida, we're talking about a whole range of affiliates and allies who ascribe to al-Qaida's ideology and that increasingly have the capability to operate outside their AORs (areas of operation)."

More than a decade after the attacks, overseas terrorist groups continue efforts to strike on American soil, albeit unsuccessfully thus far. Part of Scalici's presentation addressed threats posed by Iran and its proxies, especially Lebanese Hezbollah in Lebanon. In October 2011, Manssor Arbabsiar, a 56-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen, was charged with plotting on behalf of Iran to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the United States.

"It was a wakeup call for us," Scalici said. "Given the increased operational tempo of their (Iranian) terrorist activities overseas, we have to prepare for the possibility that they will turn their sights back on the United States again."

Groups such as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) have a stated goal of attacking the United States and have pledged to continue trying. While such organizations have so far failed to execute successful attacks on American soil – AQAP claimed responsibility for sponsoring both the thwarted package bomb and Detroit Christmas Day bombing plots — they have shown resourcefulness in messaging that attracts lone actors in the United States.

Easily accessed information on the Internet can groom potential terrorists in attack methods – from small firearms to building bombs – and provide the motivation to act. By nature, countering those lone actors poses a different kind of challenge than containing overseas terrorist organizations as the lack of an identifiable association makes them difficult to detect, Scalici noted.

State and local law enforcement and other first responders working at the community level are best suited to fill this homeland security gap, Scalici said.



"This really calls for a whole of nation approach," she added. "No longer can we just rely on the Intelligence Community and the U.S. military. State and local first responders and others may be the first ones to observe signs of problems in their neighborhoods, (or) of radicalization, so they can report it and help deter it."

With one eye on the other side of the world, the homeland security community is also grappling with the continued threat posed by domestic violent extremist groups that are driven by a host of agendas.

"We're not concerned about the lawful activities of these groups," Scalici said. "We are concerned about any plans for carrying out violent acts in the United States. Part of it is building situational awareness and finding what is motivating these groups, how to identify signs of individuals who are members of this group, and what are past incidents of violence."

Combating these threats requires, among other measures, the oft-mentioned homeland security tools of analysis and sharing information. To that end, educational institutions such as CHDS play a role in improving those practices. Putting advanced professionals in a classroom setting studying the common theme of homeland security issues helps nurture the collaboration needed for information sharing, Scalici added.

Kathleen Kiernan of the CHDS faculty, who is co-instructor for the course, agreed.

"If the interagency environment and ethos of collaboration are not informing strategic level decisions when our practitioners-students arrive at CHDS, it surely is by the time they leave," Kiernan observed. "We were honored to host Dawn Scalici, a career professional who is unafraid to tackle the complex problems of a complex world."

Interacting with students who are accomplished professionals assists DHS officials in meeting the agency's mission. Scalici said she learned from the students and garnered valuable information to take back to headquarters.

"We talked a little bit about some of the perceived shortfalls of information-sharing," she said. "That is something I'll take back to DHS to see if I can support some changes over time. You learn a lot by meeting people and understanding what their day-to-day challenges are. I think we have come a long way in terms of an information sharing environment, but we still have a ways to go to optimize it."

In her capacity as DHS deputy under secretary for analysis, Scalici leads the analytic efforts of DHS Intelligence and Analysis with a focus on advancing analysis and developing intelligence products to support the DHS leadership and state, local, tribal, territorial and private sector partners. She also serves as co-chair of the Domestic Security Alliance Council, a strategic partnership between the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and the private sector.

[Copyright/Accessibility/Section 508](#)